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ABSTRACT

Richard Lanigan's phencmenology cf human communicatcn is applicable to the develcpment of a model for critiquing oral interpretation performance. This phenomenological model takes conscious experience of the relationship of a person and the lived-world as its data base, and assumes a phenomenology of performance which creates text in the triadic relaticnship of literature, persona/performer, and audience. The model explains the experience through the explicit proposition of implicit conscious experience of the literature-in-performance in a three-step process: (1) description of one's conscious experience, or "what I know"; (2) definition, or "how I know"; and (3) interpretation, or "why I know," where the performance-of-audience creates meaning. Each step of this phenomenological method entails the previous one in synergistic relationship. Implications of the model include the following: the use of the audience's conscious experience of the literature-in-performance as data base is preferable tc the use of imposed or hypothetical constructs; the method may be useful for critiquing other performances; oral interpretatcn criticism may be seen as a paradigm of human communicatcn; and a phenomenological performance criticism is needed. (DF)

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# THE AUDIENCE PERFORMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL MODEL FOR CRITICISM OF ORAL INTERPRETATION PERFORMANCE

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# THE AUDIENCE PERFORMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL MODEL FOR CRITICISM OF ORAL INTERPRETATION PERFORMANCE

The experience of performance criticism confronts teacher and student alike with frustration and confusion. One hand balances the performance of literature; the other hand weighs the critique, usually in the form of a verbal or written evaluation in which teacher, performer, and audience may participate. The relationship between the two is elusive and often obscure. How to structure the critique session for its maximum meaning and use to all participants is the question raised by the act of criticism. This question, however, relies on a more basic problematic: what happens to the audience during performance? A phenomenological model based upon a theory of human communication may be used to explicate the nature and function of the audience and criticism for oral interpretation performance.

The audience in oral interpretation theory is traditionally cast in one of three roles in the writer-reader-audience relationship.[1] First, the audience receives a message sent by (author's intent) and through (reader's intent) the performer. A critique of the performance judges the extent to which the speaker's intent is communicated to the audience, or there is coincidence of subject and object. Such a communicational approach is characterized by Carolyn Gilbert, for example, in her concept of "feedback."[2] A second approach offers the audience a more minor role, as witnesses to the more primary writer-reader relationship. Essentially, the audience is not part of the performance, which consists of the coincidence of the literature's and the reader's subjectivities. Wallace Bacon's concept of "coalescence" between poem and interpreter exemplifies this second approach.[3] A third view treats

the audience even less explicitly: theoretical discussion omits the audience role altogether.[4]

In any case, such critical stances place the audience in the role of receiving and/or experiencing a message sent by the reader. One chooses either the performer or the literature as primary. The criticism of performance is based on a linear, mechanistic model in which the message is defined as discreet, static, causal, and directional.[5] In all cases described, a subject/object split between performer and audience is implied.

Carol Gaede's study of performance criticism objects to the view of oral interpretation as message transmission and attempts to describe and specify what happens to audience members in performance by developing a phenomenological model for criticism.[6] In the view of criticism as interaction among participants, process replaces state (as static message transmission) and circularity replaces linearity (directionality of message). Nonetheless, the theory and model rely upon the designation of the audience as criticism-giver and the performer as criticism-receiver. This substitution of the audience's subjectivity for the performer/literature subjectivities remains a duality and causal relationship. The result marks yet another incidence of message transmission. In sum, Gaede's attempt also reflects the constraints of the mechanistic model--and the problematic of the relationship between performer and audience persists.

The preceding views of audience roles are not so much inaccurate as they are incomplete. Thus, the unsolved problematic of performance criticism may be summarized as the limitations of its description as a mechanistic model. The existence of the oppositions outlined above reveals this problematic to be that of digital (either/or) choice[7] between subject and object, or, alternately, subject and subject.

To address this problematic, a phenomenology of human communication as articulated by Richard Lanigan will be applied to develop a model for critiquing oral interpretation performance.[8] Human communication has the advantage of situating and completing the views of audience presented above. Such a phenomenological method takes conscious experience--the meaningful relationship between a person and his lived-world--as the data base. The phenomenological method explains experience through the explicit proposition of implicit conscious experience in a three-step process of description, definition, and interpretation. The steps relate synergistically, i.e., the movement between any two steps entails the preceding step, creating a new part and whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.[9]

In the case of oral interpretation, the conscious experience of the interpreter in performance constitutes the data base for a phenomenology. Oral interpretation is therefore defined as the performance of literature where literature evolves from message to a multiplicity of messages, or "text," according to Umberto Eco's semiotic analysis.[10] In the instance of criticism, the term literature-in-performance entails the creation of text in oral interpretation which the audience takes as meaningful. Literature-in-performance names a code condition in which writer, reader, and audience are constituents. Any one constituent is meaningful in the context of the other parts. Thus, a phenomenological criticism necessitates the re-definition of these constituent terms. "Literature" may be described as the abstract, ideal system of potentialities which is manifested in performance. The "performer/persona" manifests literature in a degree variation, an analogical (more/less) relationship.[11] Finally, the "audience" functions as the ratio between literature and performer/persona.[12]

Now criticism may be seen as these three constituents in relationship;

or, meaning for the audience member is his conscious experience of performance-of-literature, performance-of-performer/persona, and performance-of-audience. A corollary to these definitions asserts that subject and object, technique and meaning are inseparable: literary, performance, and personal norms operate contextually in each performance-of relationship. In sum, a phenomenological model for criticism makes explicit the conscious experience of the audience during performance. These meanings may then be articulated by teacher and students following the performance.

To demonstrate the focus upon the conscious experience of the audience-member as the data base for criticism of literature-in-performance, the remainder of this portion of the paper shall use the first-person pronoun as an audience member. The theory of human communication will be developed in a three-part analysis of each step in the phenomenological model: a description of the criticism step and its classroom application; its reduction as the constitution of context and/or choice for the audience; and its meaning as human communication. In this final part, the term "audience" is systematically re-defined in semiotic terms (the triadic source-message-addressee relationship)[13] which avoid the problems cited in the mechanistic model.

What I know composes description, the first step of the phenomenological method. What I know in criticism is my experience of the literature. More specifically, what I take as meaningful in description is the performance-of literature. Literature, as defined above, is an abstract system of potentialities which is manifested by the performer/persona to some degree in the literature-in-performance. Because phenomenology is based upon my conscious experience, I do not rely upon any preconceived notions, constructs, or categories for the literature, performer/persona, or my own criticism. Rather I "bracket," in the tradition of Husserl, any presuppositions I may have, always

returning to the meaning of the performance-of-literature for me. In this way, the description includes all cognitive, affective, and conative statements about the performance-of-literature. In each theme, meaning is implicit, although unexplicated.

The description step may be guided in the critique session by variations of the model question, "What do I know (think, feel, value) about the literature-in-performance?" where focus for meaning is the performance-of-literature. Note that such a description does not separate internal/external criteria nor technique and meaning. Three typical problems arise in description. First, there is an attempt to separate subject and object ("what happened" versus "what happened to me"). Second, criticism frequently goes little beyond description as the literary experience taken from literature-in-performance: the implicit meanings of the themes remain unexplicated and the discussion stays on the level of "content." Third, a critique session may omit description altogether and rely upon preconceptions and assumed experiental meanings.

The description of my conscious experience for criticism may now be defined as "what I know about the literature-in-performance," or, alternately, "what it says." The performance-of-literature functions as the object for my consciousness. What is constituted in the description step of the model is the context for choice, my experience of the performance (performer/persona as degree variation)-of-literature (system of potentialities). What I do not know is the choice in context as "how I know about the literature-in-performance," or "what it means."

In semiotic terms, I have information, or a message as sign presence, in the description step. Thus, the "I" as audience member in description is the addressee, a distinct and designated person. In sum, the description step in criticism constitutes the performance-of-literature as the context for

choice in conscious experience. This level of criticism corresponds to Gilbert's theory on feedback.

The second step in the phenomenological method is definition, or how I know. Recall that the method is synergistic in nature, the movement to the second step creating a new experience and entailing the first step in a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The definition takes the description and focuses upon the performance-of-performer/persona. Specifically, what I take as meaningful in definition is the performance-of-performer/persona as the degree variation of literature in the literature-in-performance. Definition requires a technique which reduces the description as the experience of the performance-of-literature to its essential parts--those which belong to my consciousness.[14] The technique takes the themes of the description and determines what is essential in them by imagining each theme as present and absent within the context of the other themes. In this way, typifications are evolved as essential to my conscious experience of the literature-in-performance.

The model question for a critique session in the definition step asks, "How do I know (think, feel, value) the literature-in-performance?" with focus for meaning on the performance-of-performer/persona. From the imagining of the cognitive, affective, and conative themes as present and absent, I isolate thoughts, emotions, and values which cannot be "thought away." Importantly, what I am defining is no longer "content" but rather structures implicit in the themes. The critique session typically neglects the second step, i.e., I usually know what I experience and what it means to me, but the articulation of the relationship between the two is left unexplicated. The reminder that definition entails description and must also return to my conscious experience of the literature-in-performance will aid the definition step.

The definition of my conscious experience of the performance-of-performer/persona evolves as "how I know about the literature-in-performance," or "what it means." Again recall that in the synergistic movement from description to definition I have created a new experience which was previously only implicit. The performance-of-performer/persona is the object of my consciousness. What is constituted by the definition step in the model is the choice in context, my consciousness of the performance-of-performer/persona as the explicit degree variation of literature. What I do not know is whether "what it means" is "what it says:" does the choice reflect literature as context? In other words, there is a digital relationship between the performance-of-literature and the performance-of-performer/persona, between context and choice.

In a semiotic description of the definition step of criticism, I have communication, or a code as both sign presence (performance-of-literature) and sign absence (performance-of-performer/persona). The "I" as audience member may now be seen as the source or addressee in the triadic relationship. There is role reversal, although a discreet person is still distinguished as audience. Finally, the definition step in criticism constitutes the performance-of-performer/persona as choice in context of consciousness. Caede's model corresponds to the second step in criticism and is appropriate here--although still incomplete.

The third step in the phenomenological method is interpretation, or why I know. Interpretation articulates the value essential to the description and definition. What is essential to the performance-of-literature and performance-of performer/persona? The movement from definition to interpretation likewise creates a new experience, here the coincidence of my experience of the performance-of-literature and my consciousness of the performance-of-performer/persona. These two constituents are the context for meaning: meaning in

literature-in-performance is performance-of-audience. My conscious experience is the ratio beneath the performance-of-literature and performer/persona--defined to this point as different--which shows their similiarity. Thus, the performance-of-audience is the analog which contains the digital performance-of-literature and performance-of-performer/persona. Focus upon any one of the three constituents contains the other two parts as context. Performance-of-literature and performance-of-performer/persona are seen as contextual: they are about each other.

The guiding question in the critique session may be formulated as "Why do I know (think, feel, value) the literature-in-performance?" where the performance-of-audience creates meaning. Recall that each step of the phenomenological method entails the previous one. A statement of interpretation therefore must be rigorously examined by making explicit its implicit grounding in my conscious experience of the literature-in-performance.

Finally, the performance-of-audience constitutes both choice and context as distinct but similiar conscious experiences. In semiotic terms, "I" as audience member function as source and/or addressee, a relationship of reversibility. As the relationship between performance-of-literature and performance-of-performer/persona, I am message; I also create text. Or, the interpretation in criticism is text, a multiplicity of messages. Indeed, "audience" finally names a relationship in literature-in-performance rather than a discreet physical entity. The view of criticism as encounter between subject and object is seen as inadequate and incomplete. Criticism is human communication--the explicit proposition of the implicit conscious experience of the audience in literature-in-performance.

There are many implications in the preceding phenomenological model for criticism of oral interpretation performance. Three will be outlined here.

First, the model suggests a shift in the nature and function of the audience. Performance includes the audience's performance during and "after" the literature-in-performance. In order for criticism to be about performance, it must take the audience's conscious experience of the literature-in-performance as its data base rather than imposed or hypothetical constructs.[15] Audience, as defined by this theory and model, no longer refers to a person. Rather, audience is the name for a relationship which is dynamic and reversible.

Second, the phenomenological model developed here for oral interpretation performance is potentially useful for critiquing other performances, such as those in public speaking and interpersonal courses. It thus extends similiar analyses.[16]

A third and larger implication follows from those preceding. Performance, as exemplified in oral interpretation and its criticism, is here defined as human communication. That is, performance names a relationship between choice and context, information and communication, speaker and listener. In other words, I am suggesting oral interpretation/criticism as a paradigm for human communication in the speech discipline.

Finally, it remains to situate this study in a larger context in order to ascertain its function as well as the nature of future research tasks. The model assumes a phenomenology of performance which creates text in the triadic relationship of literature, performer/persona, and audience. Phenomenological criticism, the object of the present study, explicates the implicit relationships of the triadic relationship in performance: performance and criticism are about each other. What is now called for is a phenomenological performance criticism which makes explicit the relationship between performance and criticism, i.e., the reversibility of performer/persona and audience, person and lived-world, performance and criticism.

## NOTES

[1]This terminology is traditional in oral interpretation literature. See, for example, Wilma H. Grimes and Althea Smith Mattingly, Interpretation: Writer, Reader, Audience (Belmont, Cal.: Wadworth Publishing, 1970).

[2]Carolyn A. Gilbert, Communicative Performance of Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 10.

[3]Wallace A. Bacon, The Art of Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), p. 38.

[4]See, for example, Charlotte Lee and Frank Galati, Oral Interpretation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977); and Chester Clayton Long, The Liberal Art of Interpretation (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

[5]Eric E. Peterson, "The Communicational Model Perspective of Oral Interpretation" (ERIC CS501799), p. 2-14.

[6]Carol Gaede, "Feedback in the Oral Interpretation Classroom: The Development and Application of a Communication Model to the Structure of the Verbal Feedback of the Critique Session," Diss. Southern Illinois Univ. 1974.

[7]Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin, and Don D. Jackson, Pragmatics of Human Communication (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), pp. 60-66.

[8]Richard L. Lanigan, "A Phenomenology of Human Communication as a Rhetorical Ethic," Central States Speech Association Conference, Detroit. 14 Apr. 1977 (also available from ERIC); and Speech Act Phenomenology (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977); see also Don Idhe, Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1977).

[9]Lanigan, "The Phenomenology of Human Communication as a Rhetorical Ethic," p. 3.

[10]Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 57-58.

[11]Watzlawick, et al., pp. 60-66.

[12]These distinctions parallel those of linguistics among syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. See John Lyons, Semantics, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 114-118.

[13]Eco, pp. 8-9.

[14]Lanigan, p. 5.

[15]For examples, see Leland H. Roloff, The Perception and Evocation of Literature (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1973), p. 181; Keith Brooks, Eugene Bahn, and L. LaMont Okey, The Communicative Act of Oral Interpretation (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975), pp. 418-422; and Carolyn Gilbert, Communicative Performance of Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 271-272.

[16]James L. Bemis and Gerald M. Phillips, "A Phenomenological Approach to Communication Theory," Speech Teacher, 13 (1964), 262-269; Richard B. Gregg, "A Phenomenologically Oriented Approach to Rhetorical Criticism," Central States Speech Journal, 17 (1966), 83-90; Thomas Sloan, "Hermeneutics: The Interpreter's House Revisited" in "New Books in Review," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 57 (Nov. 1971), 102-107; and Lawrence W. Rosenfield, "The Experience of Criticism," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 60 (Dec. 1974), 489-496.